

Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

DCS Communications Office

February 18, 2005

Knox County region celebrates "Building Families"

Submitted by Michelle Iorio, Administrative Secretary, Knox County Region

Over 100 guests enjoyed themselves at the "Celebrate Building Families" event hosted by the Knox County region on January 28.

This event was held to honor 43 children who were adopted – and their families – during the "Building Families – One Child at a Time" adoption blitz, which was held during November and December of last year.

Breakfast and lunch were provided. The children and staff enjoyed board games, a piñata, door prizes and goodie bags filled with candy and prizes. Dave Anderson provided a wonderful variety of music for our listening pleasure, in his role as our guest DJ. Knox County also took this opportunity to celebrate our staff. Each staff member was encouraged to "take a breath" and to enjoy the day.

We feel strongly that all of us are here to provide safety and well-being to the children and families we serve. We all work toward the goal of reunification, adoption and transition to adulthood, as well as to providing linkages to services when a child leaves our custody.

We honored all those staff members who had served the State of Tennessee for 25 years or longer. Regional administrator Bobby Leverett presented Certificates of appreciation to them.

Leverett, DCS attorney Susan Kovac and Bonnie Allen, a case manager 2 from the adoptions unit, were our guest speakers. Each speaker left us with a feeling of pride in what we do, as well as a desire and a determination to go forward with a united goal to become the best quality child welfare agency in the United States, and to make Knox County the best region in the state of Tennessee.

Because this event appeared to be very successful for our first attempt, the Celebration Committee is planning to hold similar events quarterly. This celebration was possible due to donations from local merchants and from The Knox County Volunteer Advisory Board. Committee members include Michelle Iorio, Chair, Dawn Black, C.J. Ribeiro,

Angela Rubin, Katrina Chesney, Gary Brooks, Kendra Shackleford, Tonetta Dibrell, Carolyn White, Becky Ervin, Dan White, Melissa Wilson and Dave Anderson.

Child Protective Services' Satellite Training

Submitted by Sheila Moss, Administrative Secretary for Intake and Investigations

Our child safety staff has been involved in an exciting new training project via satellite. The original training sessions were on January 28 and 31 and included Child Protective training sessions by Commissioner Viola P. Miller, Denise Alexander from Child Safety, and Jennifer Hamilton with the Special Investigation Unit of DCS.

This initial project was so well received that the satellite training schedule was extended to include Friday sessions through the months of February, March and April. Training broadcasts originate at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro and are sent statewide via satellite to university consortium locations. Participants are primarily new and existing Child Protective Services staff and other staff associated with this division.

Presenters have been professionals from within the department and also from the community. Stacey Miller from our Legal division presented on CPS legal issues on February 11. On February 18, Patti Van Eys from Vanderbilt University discussed attachment problems in children.

Other scheduled speakers include Sue Ross, Our Kids; Dr. Chris Greeley, Vanderbilt University; Bonnie Beneke, Tennessee Chapter of Child Advocacy Centers; Lekethia Sanford and Donna Humbert, the Domestic Violence Unit with Family and Children's Services; Frank Mix, DCS Permanency Planning; and Steve Hornsby, DCS General Counsel. Topics covered will include child sexual abuse, domestic violence, working with the judicial system and other informative topics.

Denise Alexander, Director of Intake and Investigation said, "I am excited about the opportunity to participate in this initiative and encourage our staff to be involved."

Another project undertaken by the Intake and Investigation unit is the training of trainers for an initiative within the department called Structured Decision Making to reduce subsequent maltreatment to children and families and expedite permanency for children. DCS trainers have come from all over the state to Nashville to be trained.

There are two very inspiring aspects of Structured Decision Making (SDM) in Tennessee: the collaboration between CPS and CSA staff and the use of the SDM process. Since its inception in late summer, planning for the use of SDM assessments in Tennessee has been a collaborative effort between CPS staff and CSA/FSS staff. Representatives from both programs have provided input regarding implementation issues and have participated in a training of trainers. The process has been piloted in the Upper Cumberland and Southwest regions of the state.

The CPS and CSA trainers will work together as co-trainers to bring together CPS, FSS and legal staff for the training. The roll out of the SDM process in Tennessee has begun and will continue through April, at which time all CPS and FSS staff will be trained.

What exactly is Structured Decision Making (SDM)? It is a set of structured assessment tools that increases worker consistency in safety and risk assessment, as well as case planning. The tools have been proven to be reliable and valid. Research has repeatedly demonstrated the effectiveness of this method. Detailed definitions for assessment increase the likelihood that workers assess all families using a similar framework. The model and its tools are easy to use and understand and will help workers organize case narrative and provide aggregate data facilities. Child Safety's Intake and Investigation Unit has brought in outside experts to participate in the initial training and is pleased to be involved in bringing this innovative method to Tennessee.

Continuous Quality Improvement: A Very Brief History of CQI

Submitted by Ted Slifer, Program Coordinator, QA/CQI Division, Office of Performance Enhancement

The Industrial Revolution began in the mid-18th century in England. It was characterized by the development of machinery, linking of power to machines and establishment of factories employing many workers. Due to our close ties with England, the Industrial Revolution made its way to America. The consequence of grouping workers into shops and factories, and of specialization of labor, was a gradual emergence of more systematic attention towards production and efficiency in the work place, which, of course, necessitated attention to workers.

Frederick Taylor is known as the father of the Scientific Management Movement. Working in the steel industry in the late 1870s, he believed that the scientific techniques of experimentation, forming and testing hypotheses, and proposing theories based on research could be used by management to increase productivity and efficiency in the workplace. Through the use of these techniques, he and others who followed him were able to increase worker efficiency and, therefore, production.

In the mid 1920s, researchers at the Western Electric Company's Hawthorne Plant near Chicago began some experiments to determine how lighting affected workers and their outcome. To their surprise, in one experiment production increased when lighting was improved, but in another experiment production also increased when lighting was severely reduced. The researchers concluded that, in experiments involving people, it was not possible to change one variable (lighting) without affecting other variables such as worker or worker-supervisor interaction. It became clear that it was human interaction that affected morale and motivation, which, in turn, were affecting production. Thus began the Human Relations Movement in industry, which ever since has been a major influence on modern management. This movement is characterized by its focus on group/team behavior and workers' feelings as they relate to productivity and morale.

Further inquiry and experimentation led researchers to conclude that productivity was associated with the extent to which employees became a team. Worker cooperation and enthusiasm was related to the interest in the work group/team by the supervisor and higher management. Additional findings were that production and efficiency in the workplace were related to the extent to which workers participated in making decisions and changes that would affect them. It was a slow but steady process for this human relations movement to make its way first across industries, then to other organizations, and finally completing the journey to DCS.

Continuous quality improvement is a significantly refined approach to management arising from these movements – particularly the human relations movement. It is research based on emphasizing improvement in production (child safety and well-being). CQI does this by measurement of critical outcome areas associated with production goals. A hierarchy of problem-solving and decision-making teams review and analyze the data and identify and remove/reduce barriers to production and efficiency in the workplace. Techniques to accomplish this include participation on teams by all staff members, equality of team members, open communication and feedback.

Aggressive Hope for Davidson County DCS

Submitted by Peggy Carter, CQI Coordinator for the Davidson County Regional Office

Davidson County is a very intense and busy office right now. We have lots of wonderful things in the works that promote continuous quality improvement (CQI) in a big way. The following is just one of the many exciting ventures that I hope to be able to share with you in the upcoming months.

Aggressive Hope is a consortium/think tank considering the challenges and potential of teenagers in foster care and in relative care placements. More than 50 people representing a kaleidoscopic array of stakeholders (youth, foster parents, social service providers, DCS staff from both Davidson County and Central Office, universities, the faith community, elected officials and Juvenile Court) are invited to gather twice a quarter to share information, insight and ideas to address the most pressing issues of these youth.

Sue Fort White, Family-to-Family Coordinator for Davidson County, generated the concept to strengthen communication among the many organizations that expressed a desire to help this population. As she explains, “Tom Riss and other staff were doing such a great job spreading the word about how many youth we have in custody that suddenly there was huge interest from the community. I needed a way to capture and respond to the generosity and interest from our community partners. Thus, Aggressive Hope was born.”

A diverse group of 40 people met in July 2004 and committed to a five-hour work session. There was keen interest in “keeping it real” and getting something done quickly ... everyone wanted some “low hanging fruit”. Since that initial workday, the following developments represent the Aggressive Hope harvest:

- The Santana Group – An ongoing small group intervention for older adolescent girls led by adult mentors and Fisk University faculty and graduate students.
- Project School Liaison – Formal appointment of leadership staff to each Metro School cluster.
- Project 211 – Formal relationship with 211 to publicize the need for foster and respite parents for teens.
- The YBuild Connect – Formal relationship with YMCA YBuild Program, a residential construction apprentice program designed for 18-24 year old males to teach non-violence curriculum for all teenagers in foster care and relative care placements through the newly developing Oasis Center Non-violence Institute.
- Fisk PILOT Program – Creation of a formal partnership between DCS and Fisk University to provide relevant and culturally sensitive group mentoring for teens in custody.

Core Leadership

CORE Leadership Meeting Mary Beth Franklyn, Presiding February 15, 2005

Employee Recognition/Multicultural Committee

The employee recognition program is being developed. The employee recognition retreat has been scheduled for March 15-16 at Pickwick Landing State Park and will include staff from communications, regional representation, human resources and juvenile justice staff. The regional administrators worked on developing a performance evaluation catalog for case management staff based on areas in Central Office (Safety, Permanency, Well-Being, etc) during the last RA meeting. Performance evaluations should be coupled with job plans and tied to outcomes. Training will be offered to supervisors in the regions on how to use this tool. Legal staff will be a part of the training team and will discuss the disciplinary action piece. It is important that we systematically ensure that performance evaluations are completed and filed in a timely manner. The Commissioner stated we want to support the regions when they want to take disciplinary action but documentation needs to support that. William Haynes has discussed the need for a performance evaluation notification process with Michael Price to hold people accountable for quality and timeliness of completion. Personnel will look to provide support to the regions.

Committee on Multicultural Affairs

The Committee on Multicultural Affairs has met three times and selected Vicky Burton of the Southwest CSA as the chairperson. One of the goals of the committee is to increase the cultural competence of the department and sanction a training curriculum with assistance from the consortium.

Three sub-committees have been formed. Daryl Chansuthus will chair research data for the committee. Eric Henderson will chair training. And Sara Ogilvie will chair limited English proficiency (LEP).

Donna Johnson and Valerie Handy also attended the last meeting. The next meetings have been scheduled for March 23-24. The next step will be to make an initial presentation to the Core leadership Team.

The Commissioner was concerned that we have not begun as an agency to address the disparity issue with our children in care. There is considerable racial disparity in our juvenile justice population. We hope this group can address these areas. We hope to do some forums in the community around disparity issues. Elizabeth Black stated the ninth outcome in regional plans address disparity issues.

A suggestion was made to link the Committee on Multicultural Affairs with the Juvenile Justice Task Force and the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth.

Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

Susan Brothers discussed the Program Improvement Plan. We are in the seventh of eight quarters. Our seven outcomes for child welfare and a few systemic factors outcomes will end on June 29. There will be a longer time frame because of the end of PIP and re-evaluation of Child Family Service Review (CFSR). They are going to give us a 12-month non-interrupted and non-overlapping period to get data cleaned up before we go into our next CFSR review. The Commissioner wants to schedule a meeting around PIP and include Bonnie Hommrich, Judy Cole and Daryl Chansuthus.

Functional Assessment: Update

Landra Orr, Director of Functional Assessment, gave a handout and discussed the Functional Assessment to the CLT. The Commissioner expressed concern that it is all narrative in its current incarnation.



The time is always right to do what is right. – Martin Luther King, Jr.